














Professional Skills and Competencies of the Future Police Officers

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Abstract

The article examines the level of professional skills and competencies of the future police officers during training according to experimental methodology. The methodology implies using specially developed situational tasks aimed at the formation of professional skills and competencies of future patrol police officers. The police officers of the National Academy of Internal Affairs (Kyiv, Ukraine) who attended the course of the initial professional training participated in the study. An experimental (EG) and control (CG) groups were formed. The research determined the EG officers to have a significantly better level of professional skills in comparison to the CG officers. A high level of professional skills will contribute to the improvement of the efficiency of the activity of future patrol police officers.

Keywords: professional skills and competencies, professional training, police officer

1. Introduction

The performance of the National Police officers of Ukraine places high demands on the formation of the professional skills and competencies of personnel. It is conditioned by the constant possibility of life-threatening and health-related situations during the performance of their duties [1, 2, 12, 14]. This is especially the case for patrol police officers, as they perform their duties in the conditions of constant contact with various segments of the population. Every time they have to stand against the most complicated contingent of the population and problem people (who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs;



emotionally excited; mentally ill). Such people are characterized by asocial orientation, unmanageability, aggression, the hidden nature of the criminal activity, confrontation and hostility to government officials. There is a constant threat of armed conflict. In such cases, police officers must be prepared to repel an attack and detain the offenders [3, 6, 9, 21, 29, 31].

Working over normative documents and scientific literature gives grounds to state that the professional readiness of the patrol police officers is determined by the knowledge of the legislative base, the formation of special physical skills, the development of professionally important characteristics, the practical experience [1, 5, 8, 33].

An important component of a police officers' professional readiness is the level of professional skills and competencies [7, 15, 25, 35, 36]. In scientific literature, the interpretations of the notion "professional skills" differ. It is conditioned by the specific professional activities of the specialists and their tasks. In the context of the professional activities of patrol police officers, the notion embraces a range of professional skills and competencies, including rapid and high-quality processing of official documentation, working with databases, radio communication, and videotaping during patrolling, providing emergency medical assistance, etc. The works [4, 13, 19, 23, 30] mention that it is vital to develop the competencies and skills of patrol police officers in using techniques of physical influence, special tools and firearms; driving skills in extreme conditions. The authors also emphasize that the officers with the developed skills in psychological influence on the offender and the ability to convince comply with the requirements of the law perform their duties more effectively.

2. Literature Review

The analysis of the latest researches and publications showed that there are a considerable number of scientific works devoted to the study of the problems of professional training of the workers of the security agencies [4, 10, 17]. The scientists [16, 22, 24, 32] state that a sufficient level of special physical skills and abilities makes it possible to perform the tasks related to police enforcement measures effectively. The specialized literature, based on the results of the questionnaire, designated that the performance of official duties mainly (81.3%) involves the use of police preventive measures and to a lesser extent (18.7%) police enforcement measures [20]. The ratio of the application of police measures depends on a number of factors, the main of which are the features of the patrol area, the weather conditions, and the level of professional skills of police officers. The seasonal (summer, winter) and weekly (weekdays, weekends, holidays) shifting of applying police measures were identified. The increase in the indicator of using coercive measures during night shifts, especially on weekends and holidays, during mass events (football matches, concerts, etc.) is discovered. This indicator is above the middle on patrol territory with more nightlife establishments. The scientists mention that in the case of such situations, police officers should be physically and psychologically prepared to repel the attack and detain offenders [6, 11, 28]. According to the results of the investigations K. V. Kim [10], the physical fitness of law enforcement officers is a certain physical condition formed in the course of physical training that ensures high working capacity and successful performance of functional duties and operational tasks.

There is a number of works aimed at studying and improving the physical training of the workers of security agencies [12, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27]. The authors recommend the use of various means, including kettlebell lifting, boxing, sambo wrestling, hand-to-hand combat, etc. According to the research of scientists [1, 16, 36] more effective formation of professional skills and competencies can be achieved due to the practical orientation of the educational process and the use of innovative teaching methods. In this regard, O. A. Morhunov [16] recommends introducing special tasks, which are developed on the basis of real-life situations, among which there are both standard, most common and problematic ones, in training courses on physical training of cadets.

An analysis of the patrol police officers' activity characteristics shows that during patrolling, officers have to use police enforcement measures. However, when offenders resisted, police officers faced difficulties and could not efficiently execute physical influence techniques in many cases. The problems arose during the detention of offenders, the use of special tools, firearms. That is, the police officers' competencies and skills of applying police enforcement measures are insufficiently formed. In extreme situations, their



efficiency is low. The improvement of existing training methods and the development of new ones aimed at training future law enforcement officers with a sufficient level of professional competencies and skills in a relevant area for scientific research.

The aim of the study is to investigate the level of professional skills and competencies of future police officers during professional training according to the experimental training methodology.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The listeners of the Center of Initial Professional Training, called the Police Academy, of the National Academy of Internal Affairs (n=61) who attended a six-month course in 2019 participated in the pedagogical experiment. An experimental (EG, n=30) and control groups (CG, n=31) were formed. The control and experimental groups were formed with a random selection.

3.2. Materials

Concerning the content specifics of the program of the initial professional training of police officers, the requirements for professional skills and competencies and educational process peculiarities, the initial level of formation of the studied indicators was not determined. The investigation of the level of professional skills and competencies of future police officers in the process of training according to the experimental methodology and mathematical processing of the obtained results was carried out at the end of the pedagogical experiment, just before a comprehensive exam.

The research methods are theoretical (the method of conceptual-comparative analysis, structural-system analysis, synthesis, generalization); empirical (pedagogical observation of the educational process; interviews with listeners and scientific and pedagogical staff, pedagogical experiment, the methods of mathematical statistics).

4. Results and Discussion

The formation of professional skills and competencies of future patrol police officers takes place while mastering the course of initial professional training. The improvement is achieved working over cases, and subsequently – as a result of gaining practical experience and during the professional training of police officers (service training, postgraduate education). The efficiency of the formation of the professional skills and competencies of future police officers depends on the content and methodology of training. The professional training of police officers is carried out in accordance with article 72 of the Ukrainian Act "On the National Police" (2015). The professional training contains a number of stages, the key of which is the stage of professional establishment, which covers the period of mastering the course of initial professional training. The development of the skills of using the police coercive measures begins at this stage [20]. One of the police measures, which, according to the model of the use of force, usually precede the use of other coercive measures, is a physical force (hand-to-hand combat techniques). The use of physical force depends on a number of factors, the most important of which are: 1) the level of danger to life and health of both a police officer and the population. There is no algorithm for establishing the level of danger, it can be determined by psycho-subjective analysis of the scene, the presence of firearms or cold weapons, objects used as weapons, the probability of their use; the number of persons subjected to physical coercion measures, their physical and mental state, age, alcohol or drug intoxication, behavioral features (aggression); the availability of vehicles for both officers and offenders; 2) the environment and conditions under which the event occurs: locality, factors that prevent from using physical coercion, the items that can help or prevent the actions of an officer; 3) the level of physical preparedness of a patrol officer and one's ability to apply the techniques of physical influence; 4) the nature of the offense and its volume: the violation of public order; failure to comply with the legal requirements of a representative of the authorities; resisting a police officer or other person who performs official duties; assaulting citizens, police officers, or security, residential, or other objects; hostage taking, etc; 5) the purpose of applying the measures of physical coercion: assistance, rescue, prevention or termination of the offense; the detention of the person who committed the crime or who was caught while committing the crime.

The choice of a measure of physical influence is a personal choice of a police officer according to the



age, orientations, individual anthropometric data, the most acceptable type of martial arts, or a combination of several kinds of measures. The main thing is the achievement of the final result, that is, the efficient use of physical impact measures, provided that they are legally enforced. In all cases, the actions of patrol police officers should always be justified, fair and lawful.

Taking into account the advanced experience of professional training of future police officers, modern scientific researches in this area, the authors' methodology of training police officers, which included the use of forms, methods, and means of police officers training taking into account pedagogical conditions, principles and conceptual approaches, was developed. The main pedagogical conditions are the formation of motivation of police officers to increase their level of professional readiness; an adequate level of material support for the educational process; practical orientation of the educational process; professional competence of teachers and instructors; the engagement of police officers in active extracurricular activities of professional and practical orientation. According to the authors' methodology, the main approaches ensuring the qualitative formation of the professional skills and competencies of future police officers are axiological, humanistic, activity, integration, competence, person-centered, praxeological, resource, synergistic, and systematic. At the same time, the competence approach should be considered crucial in organizing the educational process of future patrol police officers. Achieving the goal of professional training is possible, subject to complying with a set of pedagogical principles, the main of which are the following: consciousness and activity, clarity, systematicity and consistency, accessibility, emotionality, stimulation of self-education and independence in studying, connection of theory with practice, professional orientation, continuity of education, succession and perspective.

The peculiarity of the authors' methodology is the advanced practical orientation of the educational process due to the introduction of specially developed situational tasks and variational situational tasks in the educational courses of professionally practical training and the complex development of professionally important characteristics. The application of situational tasks is aimed at more effective acquisition of special knowledge (the procedure and rules for the use of weapons, security measures when handling the weapon, the material part of firearms, legal grounds for the use of physical force and special means, etc.), the formation of skills and competencies (the use of physical force, firing exercises, compliance with firearms training standards). The purpose of a situational task is to formulate the algorithm of the correct actions and skills in dealing with service situations related to public order violation, crimes against life and health, crimes against property, violation of traffic safety. Each task involves: 1) learning the algorithm of legitimate and safe actions in a certain situation; 2) the improvement of the principle of "contact and coverage", efficient communication, personal security measures, knowledge of legal framework, emergency assistance, the enforcement of police coercion and self-defense techniques; 3) the promotion of the development of psychological resilience, courage, decisiveness, and confidence in one's own actions. The innovations of the presented methodology are to introduce variational situational tasks that are used while working over the cases. Their number is increased due to the introduction of situational tasks that simulate the performance of official tasks, which are most common in the work of patrol police, as well as tasks during which officers faced some difficulties, in the educational process.

In the context of the peculiarities of the professional activity of patrol police officers, identifying the level of development of special competencies and skills provided the designation of three indicators: 1) "the formation of competencies and skills in self-defense tactics"; 2) "the formation of competencies and skills in firearms training"; 3) "the formation of competencies and skills in working over the cases efficiently". According to the authors' methodology, the level of development of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in self-defense tactics was determined by the results in the practical solution of three situational tasks with the use of coercive measures. The first task involved complex actions during the forceful detention of a person in any way (submission hold or chokehold, throw, etc.) with the transition to detention, handcuffing, external examination, convoying. The second task included the complex actions of a police officer using special means (defensive and attack actions, detention, exemptions from captures and grasping with the use of a rubber baton, handcuffing, conducting a surface inspection of a person, in particular, with the threat of the use of firearms). The third task embraced the complex actions of a police officer in the case of an attack by an offender (exemptions from capture and grasping, striking by hands, feet,



improvised means, counteracting the threat of firearms or cold weapons). The mistakes while solving a situational problem with the use of coercive measures should be considered: not combined, delayed techniques applying, loss of balance, failures in any element of techniques; breach of personal security measures; violation of the task sequence; failure to perform the constituent elements of the techniques; carrying out actions with stops; omissions of strikes with hands, feet, improvised means, cold weapons; inappropriate use of special tools or their use violating legal grounds. The assessment of the performance of situational tasks was carried out on a four-point scale. The results of police officers were rated as excellent if the technique was performed as described, confidently, quickly, and completed with a logical outcome (the fixation of a partner with submission hold, chokehold, convoy, or complex of these actions, etc.); as good if the technique was performed as described, but slowly one minor error was made; as satisfactory if the technique was performed with violation of combination, slowly or two other mistakes were made; the task was performed in general, but uncertainly (submission hold and chokehold were not convincing, the strikes were not accentuated or they were made not in the vulnerable part, protective actions were performed irrationally, etc.); as unsatisfactory if the technique was not completed, or grossly distorted, or more than two mistakes were made; if the task or its individual elements were not completed (failed to perform protection, fixation of submission hold, convoy). The assessment of the level of development of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in self-defense tactics was carried out on a twenty-point scale. Scoring for situational tasks was determined by a combination of the scores gained. The individuals who gained 12 or fewer points had a low level of special skills development; 13-15 – a satisfactory level; 16-18 – a sufficient level; 19-20 – a high level. In the case of gaining the grades 5; 5; 5 for situational tasks, the level of formation of the studied indicator was estimated at 20 points. Provided that the grades were 5; 5; 4, the indicator was rated as 19 points. Receiving the following combinations of the grades: 5, 4, 4; 5, 5, 3, the level of formation was estimated at 18 points; 4, 4, 4; 5, 4, 3 – 17 points; 4, 4, 3 – 16 points; 5, 3, 3 – 15 points; 4, 3, 3 – 14 points; 3, 3, 3 – 12 points; 3; 3; 2 – 10 points; in all other cases – 0 points.

The level of development of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in firearms training was assessed during the comprehensive examination which included three tasks that were developed on the basis of the material studied and according to the police firing course. The first task involved the knowledge of the security measures when handling the weapon, the procedure, and rules for using the weapon, the knowledge of the material part of the weapon. The second task was in compliance with the standard of fire training. The third task was the exercise in the shooting. The evaluation of the first task was performed by five writing test tasks in each of the three directions. The grade for compliance with the standard on fire training and firing exercises was determined according to the criteria prescribed by the regulatory documents. The level of competencies and skills in the shooting was determined on the basis of the twenty-first exercise of the police firing course. The peculiarity of its implementation is to shoot from the shelter with changing firing positions and changing the magazine case. The third grade for the standard on fire training, which is a timely and qualitative indicator of the police officers' implementation of techniques and actions using training weapons in the gallery range (shooting ground, training area). The level of development of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in firearms training was determined depending on the combinations of gained grades for the task. The combinations of the grades for three tasks were transformed into a twenty-point scale and, depending on their combination; they determined the level of formation of the indicator. The distribution of the gained grades was also used for the estimation of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in self-defense tactics.

The evaluation of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in working over the cases efficiently was carried out according to the quality of solving the situational task provided by the case. The essence of the situational task is to simulate a specific event (offense) in which the role of the offenders and patrol police is performed by the police officers. The performance of the situational task of the case was evaluated by three specialists: the specialists in tactical (physical) training, emergency assistance training, and legislative area. The maximum number of points a policeman could receive in each direction for the performance of a situational task was 60 points. The minimum passing score was 32 points. The total score was the arithmetic mean of the three grades. However, if a student received less than 32 points in any direction, the exam was considered to be failed. The evaluation criteria included communication with



citizens at the place of call provided by the plot of the situational task; psychological and emotional control; legal framework operation, the accuracy of the determination of the offenders' actions; legal grounds for the enforcement of police coercive measures and the efficiency of their enforcement; compliance with personal safety measures and the principle of "contact/coverage"; emergency assistance skills; preparation of administrative materials. The levels of the listeners' special skills development according to the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in working over the cases efficiently were defined in the following way: a low level corresponded to the range of 32 to 38 points, satisfactory – from 39 to 45 points, sufficient – from 46 to 52 points; high – from 53 to 60 points.

The analysis of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in self-defense tactics at the end of the pedagogical experiment showed an authentic ($p < 0.05$) difference in the readiness of the EG and CG listeners (police officers). The mean value of the investigated indicator of the EG police officers was 16.26 ± 0.33 points, the CG police officers – 15.00 ± 0.36 points on a twenty-point scale. The introduction of the presented innovations of the original methodology in the educational process of the initial professional training of police officers provided an opportunity to state the EG police officers more efficient implementation of situational tasks in self-defense tactics. It should be noted that the performance of situational tasks by CG police officers included more mistakes. The most common were the violations of personal safety measures, slow performance of a technique, loss of balance, not always high-quality and skillful use of special means. The common situations for the CG police officers are those when they were unsure of their actions, could not respond with adequate defensive actions to the attack actions of the enemy with the use of strikes with his hands, feet, improvised means, cold weapons, etc.

On the basis of the efficiency of the situational tasks, it was possible to divide the EG and CG police officers into groups with different levels of formation of the mentioned indicator. At the end of the pedagogical experiment, no police officers with a low level of development of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in self-defense tactics were found in the EG, and 6.7% police officers were found in the CG. There were 12.9% police officers with a satisfactory level in the EG, and 40% officers in the CG. The greatest number of police officers of the EG was found to have a sufficient level of special skills formation – 67.7%, of the CG – 50%. The number of police officers with a high level varied significantly: it accounted for 19.4% in the EG, and 3.3% in the CG.

The analysis of the results of determining the development of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in firearms training showed an inauthentic ($p > 0.05$) difference in the readiness of the EG and CG police officers. However, the indicator of the EG officers was higher by 0.93 points and accounted for 17.00 ± 0.35 points, the indicators of the CG officers accounted for 16.07 ± 0.40 points. The analysis of the gained grades for fire training revealed that the EG police officers have the best results in the knowledge of the procedure and rules of using the weapons, safety measures while handling the weapon. The grades for compliance with the standard of firing training and firing exercises did not differ authentically ($p > 0.05$). The largest number of the EG and CG police officers had a sufficient level of development of this indicator. The EG included 54.8% officers with a sufficient level, the CG – 53.3%. There were found no officers with a low level in the EG, and 6.7% officers in the CG. There were found 19.4% police officers with a satisfactory level in the EG, and 30% in the CG. The number of the EG officers with a high level of development of this indicator was more than double higher, in comparison to the CG officers, namely 25.8% police officers in the EG, and 10% in the CG.

The analysis of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in working over the cases efficiently showed an authentic difference ($p < 0.001$) in the preparedness of the EG and CG police officers at the end of the pedagogical experiment. The indicator of the EG officers was higher by 5.2 points and accounted for 44.1 ± 0.96 points, of the CG police officers – 38.9 ± 0.94 points. The largest number of the EG police officers had a sufficient level of development of the indicator of the formation of competencies and skills in working over the cases efficiently – 35.5%. There were found 16.7% of such officers in the CG. The number of police officers with a low level accounted for 22.6% in the EG, and 56.7% in the CG. 32.2% police officers with a satisfactory level were found in the EG, 23.3% in the CG. The number of police officers with a high level accounted for 9.7% in the EG, and 3.3% in the CG. The analysis of points received for solving situational problems showed authentically better results of the EG police officers in tactical training and

legislative direction. The police officers behaved more confidently, operated the legal framework in the cases involving police measures (preventive and coercive) more clearly. Such results indicate the efficiency of the advanced practical orientation of the educational process through the use of situational tasks in mastering the course of primary professional training.

5. Conclusions

The use of the presented innovations of the authors' methodology contributed to the increase in the level of the professional skills and competencies of police officers. At the end of the pedagogical experiment, the EG and CG police officers were defined to have a significant difference in the development of the indicators of the formation of competencies and skills in self-defense tactics ($p < 0.05$), the formation of competencies and skills in firearms training ($p < 0.001$), and the formation of competencies and skills in working over the cases efficiently ($p > 0.05$). The results in the pedagogical experiment indicate the efficiency of the original authors' methodology. The high level of investigated indicators will contribute to the improvement of the efficiency of the future activity of patrol police officers.

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